New Member Handbook
Who is the CTU? YOU are the CTU!

For more than 75 years, the Chicago Teachers Union has been the unified voice for educators in Chicago’s public schools. We are one of America’s largest and most dynamic labor unions, representing more than 25,000 teachers, clinicians, paraprofessionals and support staff who work in Chicago Public Schools — and, by extension, the students and families they serve.

We’re the third largest education union in the nation — and the largest in Illinois. We’re an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, Illinois Federation of Teachers, Chicago Federation of Labor and the AFL-CIO. And we have the respect and support of parents, students, grassroots groups and neighborhood residents across this vibrant city.

Our union runs on rank-and-file democracy and empowerment — principles that are enshrined in our constitution and in our school communities. And our progressive values have helped inspire and ignite a nation-wide #RedForEd movement for fair wages and decent working conditions for educators in states across the U.S.

What does the CTU do?

Simply put, we protect and defend public educators and our profession in Chicago — and we organize together to get the job done. Our union puts the needs and rights of educators and the students and families we serve front and center with the people who wield power in Chicago.

When we speak and act collectively, we have real power to affect positive change in our workplaces, our communities and in Illinois’ capital, Springfield.
Why join the CTU?

Are you new to CPS? It’s a large, complex bureaucracy that, frankly put, can chew up and spit out educators. Being a member of the CTU means you are not alone. Our union represents educators and support staff at every single public school operated by the district, as well over 30 unionized charter schools. Our unity and collective strength help us advocate and win on critical professional issues like class size, employee evaluations, teaching and learning conditions, burdensome paperwork and more.

Our working conditions are our students’ learning conditions, so we advocate for good wages and benefits and adequately resourced classrooms and schools for every public educator. Take a moment today to think about the resources our schools need, the working conditions we deserve, and the benefits that are important to protect. CTU is where we come together — with the power of unity — to accomplish our goals. It takes rank-and-file members like you, playing an active role in the Union, which keeps the CTU strong for us all!

Its easy to join! Sign a union card online at: www.ctulocal1.org/card
Fighting for the schools our students deserve

Real equity and investment vs. more of the same.

Chicago's image as "global city" built on tourism, big finance, big tech, law and management services stands in stark contrast to the challenges most of our students face every day. Under Mayor Lori Lightfoot, city government favors the central city at the expense of our students' neighborhoods, creating stark disparities of wealth and poverty.

Despite her campaign promises and lofty rhetoric of equity, the current mayor’s funding policies reflect her downtown priorities. Poor and working class people are more likely to be Black or Latinx, live in highly segregated neighborhoods, and risk being pushed out of the city in increasing numbers. Schools don’t have money for libraries and clinicians — but the city can offer billions in tax breaks to the developers of Lincoln Yards while stonewalling a social worker in every school.

Our vision is for a city where working people can earn a living wage, access decent health care, afford a place to live, and send their children to good neighborhood public schools. If living conditions for our students and their families don’t improve, conditions in our schools don’t improve. As such, CTU is committed to fighting for affordable housing, living-wage jobs and racial justice, as part of our central fight for the schools our students deserve.

For public schools to thrive, they must be properly staffed with a full allotment of teachers, paraprofessionals, librarians, clinicians such as nurses, social workers, school psychologists, and more. The CTU is committed to fighting for progressive revenue to fund these positions. Read more about this vision at: www.ctulocal1.org/topics
Sanctuary for every educator, every student and every family

The Chicago Teachers Union is committed to protecting our students, our schools and our communities — including the thousands of immigrant students who attend our schools.

Chicago calls itself a “Sanctuary City.” But our sanctuary city ordinance is relatively weak, and many more actions and policies need to be adopted to increase protections for all students—especially our most vulnerable students who are immigrants, Muslims and LGBTQI.

To learn more, go to our website’s Rights At Work page about protecting immigrant students:

www.ctulocal1.org/movement/campaign-sanctuary-schools
Collective bargaining highlights and wins:

The CTU struck multiple charter operators and CPS itself in 2019, winning unprecedented gains for District employees. A few of those are listed below. To learn more, check out your contract at [www.ctulocal1.org/contract](http://www.ctulocal1.org/contract)

- Restrictions on class sizes for the first time in decades.
- Increased staffing of teacher assistants in K-2.
- Increased staffing of school social workers, certified school nurses, case managers and more.
- Improvements to school climate and culture.
- Limits on standardized testing.
- Limits on required grading.
- Limits on duplicative paperwork.
- Renewal of support for TWENTY Sustainable Community Schools.
- More power for rank and file members in their school communities and across CPS.
Know Your Rights!

Our contractual rights are only useful and meaningful if members know them and use them.

One of our most basic rights as workers is the right to union representation — your field representative.

Whenever you suspect a discussion with an administrator may lead to discipline, invoke your **Weingarten rights** by saying the words below:

“If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my Union Representative be present at this meeting. Without a representative present, I choose not to participate further in this discussion. “

**Find your Field Rep!** www.ctulocal1.org/reps

**Know your Contract!**

Learn more about the collective bargaining agreement between the Chicago Teachers Union and the Chicago Board of Education at this link:

www.ctulocal1.org/rights/contract
Professional development:

We offer professional learning experiences designed and taught by teachers. We ensure that the professional learning opportunities we provide to members reflect what current, up-to-date teaching pedagogy and content knowledge research says about what teachers should learn, know, and be able to do. Our professional development offerings align to district and state requirements, and — most importantly — the needs of our students.

The CTU Quest Center honors what members need and want, what makes teaching most effective, and how our professional development can help members become better practitioners. We take participant feedback seriously. Because the members we serve, and the students they teach, change and move in new and different directions, we too, adjust our programming. Some recent offerings include:

- Arts Integration
- Classroom Management
- Close Reading
- Common Core State Standards
- CPS Framework for Teaching
- Creating Brain Compatible Conditions
- Critical Thinking
- Cultural Competencies
- Differentiated Instruction
- Encouraging Discouraged Learners
- Formative Assessment
- Inquiry and Discussion
- Integrating the Arts
- Lesson Study
- National Board Certification
- New Member Institute
- New Teacher Support
- Meeting EL Student Needs
- Restorative Justice
- School-Home Connections (parent involvement)
- STEM Practices
- Student Engagement
- The Interactive Mathematics Classroom
- Working with Students in Trauma

Courses, classes, seminars, workshops, and study groups offer a variety of year-round CPS Lane Placement, graduate, and/or ISBE License Renewal professional development credit. For more information visit: www.ctuf.org/questcenter
Building our political power!

We know that Donald Trump and Betsy DeVos are enemies of public schools. But so are all those elected officials who try to cut school funding, attack our pensions, sand support school vouchers and charter school expansion. While few unions are more effective than the CTU in the battle against attacks on our profession, there is still work to be done in both Chicago’s City Council and in Springfield. That’s why members join together in contributing $5, $10, $20, or more each month to the CTU Political Action Committee — the CTU PAC. Sign up for the PAC at [ctulocal1.org/card](http://ctulocal1.org/card)

Our dues are not used for political purposes — so our PAC relies on extra support from our members to support progressive candidates and to pressure elected officials at the city, county and state levels. **Our efforts have paid off.** In the last few years, we’ve worked to elect CTU members to the Chicago City Council, the Cook County Board of Commissioners, and the Illinois General Assembly. Other CTU supported candidates have won dozens of races. And those electoral victories have translated into policy wins. We've increased funding to CPS by more than $1 billion annually, put real limits on charter school operators, addressed the substitute teacher shortage, ended discriminatory teacher testing, and defended retirement security for all of our members. Unfortunately, it costs money to engage in politics. Our opponents have deep pockets, so we pool our resources, giving us the resources to push back against those trying to destroy public education.

The CTU is also a founding member of United Working Families, an independent political organization that brings together community organizations, union members, and progressive activists to recruit, train, run, and support progressive candidates for elected office and hold them accountable to the political agenda of our communities. Find out more at [www.unitedworkingfamilies.org](http://www.unitedworkingfamilies.org)
CTU-ACTS

The CTU’s Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff

CTU-ACTS is a division of charter school employees within the CTU, working to mobilize charter school employees around issues of common concern, including providing the best possible education to all children regardless of race or income; strengthening our profession; expanding professional development; improving teaching and learning conditions; and bolstering our voice in school-level decision-making.

The CTU opposes school privatization and charter proliferation, which siphons off public funds into the pockets of charter operators and away from classrooms, educators and students. Charter schools are also harmed by charter proliferation and the bad practices of charter operators.

Beginning in 2009, Chicago charter schools started forming unions, and nine years later 34 unionized charters voted overwhelmingly to become CTU members. Our goal is to organize all charter educators, end low-ball pay at charter schools, and ensure that all public educators have living wages and rights at work.

Unions are growing and fighting the greed of privatizers at charters across the nation. CTU’s charter school educators have been leading the way in this movement—staging the first of a series of charter strikes in US history, winning unprecedented rights and benefits!

Know someone who may be interested in forming a union at their charter school?

CTU-ACTS helps charter workers across the city unionize, because teachers and staff—linchpins in preserving public education as a public good—need a union to effectively advocate for students, schools and our profession. Our CTU sisters and brothers at charters have said loud and clear that a formal and respected collective voice has made their schools better places to teach and better places for students to learn. If you know a charter school teacher or support staff member interested in starting a union, have them call CTU-ACTS at 312-329-9100.
Charter schools represented by CTU-ACTS

• ACERO - Bartolomé de las Casas ES
• ACERO - Brighton Park ES
• ACERO - Carlos Fuentes ES
• ACERO - Esmeralda Santiago ES
• ACERO - Major Hector P. Garcia HS
• ACERO - Octavio Paz Campus ES
• ACERO - Officer Donald J. Marquez ES
• ACERO - PFC Omar E. Torres ES
• ACERO - Roberto Clemente ES
• ACERO - Jovita Idár ES
• ACERO - Rufino Tamayo ES
• ACERO - Sandra Cisneros ES
• ACERO - Victoria Soto HS
• ACERO - Sor Juana Inés de La Cruz ES and HS
• ACERO - SPC Daniel Zizumbo ES
• ASPIRA Antonia Pantoja Alternative HS (a campus of YCCS)
• ASPIRA Business and Finance HS
• ASPIRA Early College HS
• ASPIRA Haugen MS
• ChiArts HS
• CICS – ChicagoQuest HS
• CICS – Norhttown HS
• CICS -- Ralph Ellison HS
• CICS – Wrightwood ES
• EPIC Academy HS
• Instituto Justice & Leadership Academy HS
• Instituto Health Sciences Career Academy HS
• Namaste ES
• Passages ES
• Urban Prep Academy for Young Men – Bronzeville HS
• Urban Prep Academy for Young Men – Englewood HS
• Urban Prep Academy for Young Men - West HS
• YCCS-Latino Youth HS
• YCCS-Youth Connection Leadership Academy HS
Our history

Our past fortifies our present and guides our future...

The Chicago Teachers Union is AFT Local 1 for some very important reasons. Margaret Haley, often dubbed Chicago’s ‘Lady Labor Slugger,’ is the figure who put Chicago teachers on the labor map.

She joined the all-female Chicago Teachers’ Federation in 1898, fighting to improve pay, benefits and working conditions for female teachers who earned much less than men. They battled an early plan to ‘factory-ize’ public education. In 1916 they helped found the American Federation of Teachers (AFT).

During the Great Depression, the City of Chicago sometimes paid teachers with IOUs — or not at all. Militant union teachers took to the streets to protest city leaders and Loop bankers who owed taxes that could have been used for salaries and schools. Students joined the demonstrations, which sometimes drew up to 25,000. In 1937, competing teacher unions finally united to form a single, strong organization — the Chicago Teachers Union.

In 1966, the CTU won recognition as the official bargaining agent for Chicago teachers, and negotiated its first contract in 1967.

In the following decades, effective strikes succeeded in improving both learning and working conditions.

Gains included limits on class size, preparation periods, money for classroom supplies, lanes and steps and more.
During the civil rights movement, Black students walked out of schools to protest overcrowding and discrimination in education, especially via segregated temporary trailers, ‘Willis Wagons’, named for Chicago’s school superintendent. In 1968, Black teachers led wildcat strikes to protest racist hiring, promotion, and certification policies. Their courageous work inspired the CTU to incorporate education equity into our demands. During this time, Jacqueline Vaughn became first an officer and later our first Black President.

In the late 1980s, the state legislature passed the Illinois School Reform Act, which established Local School Councils, but also seriously weakened teacher tenure. In 1995, Springfield passed a new law, the Amendatory Act, that weakened the voices of both educators and parents, limited what the union could bargain over, and gave the mayor control of schools, including the power to appoint the Board of Education. That move spawned a series of neo-liberal attacks and educational ‘deform’ that led to massive increases in the number of charter schools and privatization, school closings, school ‘turn-arounds’ and over-testing. Bankers and millionaires got the blessing of politicians they supported to refuse to pay their fair share of taxes to fund quality schools.

In 2010, CTU members elected a progressive new leadership. Under President Karen Lewis, the CTU launched major fights against school closings, charter proliferation, radical disparities in school resources and other issues that hurt our students. In 2012, we struck for the first time in 25 years — with massive community and parental support. We struck again in 2019, winning contract provisions that help reverse some of the Amendatory Act's worst provisions. Today, with CTU President Jesse Sharkey at the helm, we continue our fight for the city and schools our members and students deserve — a commitment that has inspired education unions across the country.
CTU officers, 2016 - 2021

**CTU President Jesse Sharkey** taught social studies for ten years, primarily at Senn High School, and also served as the school's union delegate before winning election as CTU vice president in 2010. In 2004, he played a leading role in a campaign to mobilize hundreds of parents, launch a website, put up a ballot initiative in the 48th ward, and build relationships with community and religious groups to oppose the takeover of Senn by a military academy.

That experience taught him that we can defend our public schools against privatization. He studied history and education at Brown University, where he studied and worked with many of the leaders of the Coalition of Essential Schools. He served as Acting President after beloved President Karen Lewis retired in 2018, and was elected President in 2019. Both of Jesse's students attend CPS schools.

**Vice President Stacy Davis Gates** taught social studies for over a decade at Englewood, Clemente and Mason Community Links high schools. She served as CTU Political and Legislative Director for six years before becoming Vice President, spearheading powerful campaigns to elect classroom teachers to all levels of local government, challenge school privatizers and union-busters, and pass the strongest charter school accountability measures in the nation.

She chairs United Working Families, an independent political organization by and for working class people and our movements, and on the board of the Action Center on Race & the Economy, which works at the intersection of racial justice and Wall Street accountability. She lives on the South Side with her husband and three children — all CPS students.
Recording Secretary Christel Williams-Hayes is a 25-year veteran of Chicago Public Schools, including as PSRP delegate, district supervisor and functional vice president. She was a CTU organizer during the 2012 strike, and became a CTU field rep in 2017. She is an IFT executive board vice president, member of the IFT Scholarship Committee and has served as co-chair of the IFT PSRP Constituency Committee and organizer of its bi-annual PSRP Constituency Conference.

Nationally, she’s worked on the PSRP Professional Problems Committee for the American Federation of Teachers and was a member of its Summer Organizing Institute in Houston, Texas. A native of Chicago’s West Side, Christel was raised by a single mother who retired as a school clerk. She graduated from John Marshall High School and proudly serves on the school’s alumni committee. She, her husband and her three daughters are all graduates of CPS.

Financial Secretary Maria Moreno was a bilingual speech-language pathologist and bilingual elementary school teacher prior to her election as CTU Financial Secretary in 2016.

Before being elected as a CTU officer, Maria served as a citywide clinician delegate, school teacher delegate, district supervisor, CTU elementary functional vice president and AFT-IFT convention delegate.

As a district supervisor, Maria worked with the CTU’s organizers, parents, teachers and community members to fight the turnaround of Marquette Elementary, oppose harmful student assessment practices, and support targeted veteran teachers in predominantly Black and Latinx school communities. As a member of the CTU Clinicians Steering Committee and Charter Outreach Committee, Maria saw how federal, state and city policies hurt Black and Latinx students and their families. These experiences showed her that being engaged with fellow members with a clear political, legislative and organizing plan of action was paramount to building our power in defense of public education and racial, social and economic justice for our students, parents and communities. Maria is currently an IFT executive board vice president and chair of the IFT special education committee. Maria, her mother and two siblings are proud graduates of CPS.
1901 W. Carroll Ave. on the Near West Side, near the intersection of Damen and Carroll.

Our union’s headquarters is housed in a facility owned and managed by the Chicago Teachers Union Foundation. We’re located near the heart of downtown Chicago, close to major public bus and elevated line transportation, with secure, on-site parking for staff and visitors. We moved to the new space from our old offices at the Chicago Merchandise Mart in 2017. This new space allowed us to consolidate membership services and operations, and host organizing activities and events not just for our own members, but for allied organizations and movements, as well.

The 100,000 square foot building includes a new meeting hall that can accommodate 800 people for monthly meetings of our House of Delegates, plus space for the CTUF Quest Center to provide a rich array of professional development training and certifications — including for the nationally respected NBCT, an advanced teaching credential that is nationally respected as representing a mark of the highest achievement for teachers.

Originally a valve manufacturing facility, the building was completely gutted and reconstructed from the inside out. We kept many of the vintage industrial features that honor the workers who came before us — and we provide dozens of meeting and learning spaces for educators, parents, students and neighborhood residents.
My school delegate:

My field rep:

My organizer:

Notes:
Solidarity Forever

Ralph Chapin, 1915

Lyrics:
When the union's inspiration through the workers' blood shall run,
There can be no power greater anywhere beneath the sun;
Yet what force on earth is weaker than the feeble strength of one,
But the union makes us strong.

Chorus:
Solidarity forever. Solidarity forever.
Solidarity forever, for the union makes us strong.